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ABSTRACT

This report provides demographic data on students attending New York City Adult Literacy Initiative (NYCALI) programs. It specifies the number of students served by each literacy provider agency (LPA) and the types of classes they attend. It includes data on total instructional hours offered, total hours of student attendance, enrollment figures by level within each type of instruction, test score gains, funding, and costs. The report is derived from data collected through the Adult Literacy Information and Evaluation System and qualitative and quantitative information included in final reports submitted by each LPA to the New York City Mayor's Office of Adult Literacy and the New York State Department of Education. After an introduction, Section 1 describes the NYCALI, examining student ethnicity, gender, age, and employment status; instructional offerings and enrollment; instructional hours and contact hours; and funding. Section 2 discusses teaching toward the 21st century, examining how NYCALI programs respond to change; professional development in NYCALI; the incorporation of technology; student population shifts and program responses; retention; and learning standards and assessment. Section 3 discusses learner gains and achievements, examining program outcomes; academic achievements; employment outcomes; family literacy; and civic and community participation. Section 4 examines the future of NYCALI programs. (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education) (SM)

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THE NEW YORK CITY ADULT LITERACY INITIATIVE

FINAL REPORT 1997-98



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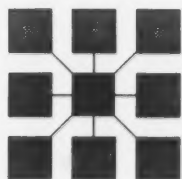
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THE NEW YORK CITY ADULT LITERACY INITIATIVE

FINAL REPORT 1997-98



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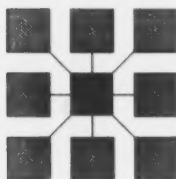
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OCTOBER, 1999

This report has been prepared under a contract with the Mayor's Office of Adult Literacy, the City of New York, and the New York State Education Department, as part of the support service component of the New York City Adult Literacy Initiative.

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Preface

The number of students served by the New York City Adult Literacy Initiative (NYCALI) during FY98 renders it one of the largest public literacy efforts in the nation. This year saw an impressive 12% increase in enrollment. The ethnic diversity among these 47,073 participants may not surprise New Yorkers, but it indicates that NYCALI providers not only service record numbers but also bridge cultural, generational, and gender differences among learners. This report provides an overview of NYCALI students and services, including basic data on the demography and employment status of learners, the numbers served by each major literacy providing agency (LPA), and the kinds of classes students attend.

Enrollment among LPAs is distributed among local community programs, neighborhood branch libraries, City University campuses, and Board of Education classrooms. Students select programs based on level and type of instruction offered, location, schedules, and instructional methods. For adults wanting to resume their education, NYCALI offers a wide range of options.

This report also presents a comprehensive overview of data including the number of instructional hours offered, the total hours of student attendance, enrollment by level within each type of instruction offered, ethnicity, gender, age, and employment status of NYCALI participants.

At the heart of NYCALI programs are the instruction, curriculum development, and staff training that tailor learning to the daily challenges adult learners face as they seek work, raise families, and participate in community activities. The report is drawn from the final data and narrative accounts submitted by each program. As the examples of program practices in the report illustrate, NYCALI participants learn reading, writing, math, and English communication skills in the context of obtaining employment, helping their children succeed in

school, understanding how to protect their health, and mastering new technologies. The vitality of New York City literacy programs lies in this contextualized approach to literacy and in the accomplishments of students.

Increasing numbers of students take exams to become United States citizens. Many obtain jobs, achieve promotions, and acquire new technological skills. Students register to vote, and increase their understanding of the law and of how government operates. As their achievements multiply, they add new voices to New York's diverse chorus of ideas and enrich life for all of its residents.

I would like to thank Debby D'Amico for writing this report; Diane Rosenthal for providing editorial supervision; Venu Thelakkat and Mariela Smith-McLallen for providing and reviewing the data; Mary Olmsted and Donald Peete for publication support; and Will Palmer for desktop publishing.

MICHAEL J. HIRSCHHORN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Introduction

The New York City Adult Literacy Initiative (NYCALI) provides free instruction in Basic Education (BE), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), math, General Educational Development (GED) Test Preparation, or Basic Education in the Native Language (BENL) to adult and out-of-school youth throughout New York City. During its fifteen years of service, the Initiative has helped hundreds of thousands of women and men to improve their literacy and English language skills. In Fiscal Year 98 (FY98), NYCALI provided services to 47,073 adult students representing an increase of 12% over the number served in FY97.

NYCALI is funded and coordinated by the New York City Mayor's Office of Adult Literacy (MOAL) and the New York State Education Department (NYSED). The system is composed of six literacy provider agencies (LPAs): the New York City Board of Education (BOE), the City University of New York (CUNY), Brooklyn Public Library (BPL), The New York Public Library (NYPL), Queens Borough Public Library (QBPL), and the Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), which administers the literacy components of 35 community-based organizations. Each LPA has its own administration responsible for the overall activities of their programs.

This report provides demographic data on the students attending NYCALI programs. It specifies the number of students served by each LPA and the types of classes they attended. It also includes data on the total instructional hours offered, total hours of student attendance (also referred to as contact hours), enrollment figures by level within each type of instruction, test-score gains, funding, and costs. This report is derived from data collected through the Adult Literacy Information and Evaluation System (ALIES) and qualitative and quantitative information

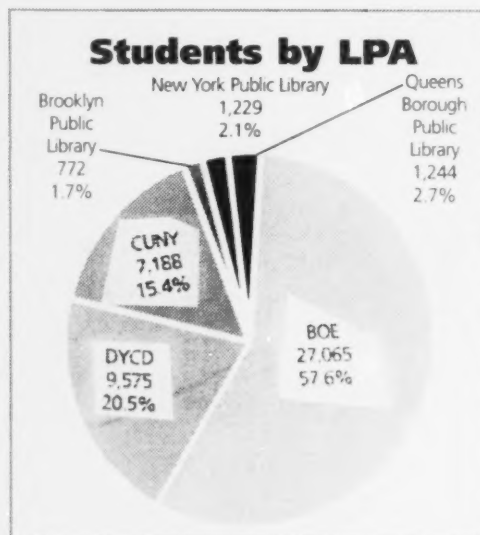
included in final reports submitted by each LPA to MOAL and NYSED.

The Board of Education continues to be the largest provider of adult education classes, serving more than half of NYCALI participants. The three public library systems provide small-group instruction to students at the most beginning stages of their reading and writing development (grade level 0-4.9), and the majority of students participating in ESOL instruction attend classes at community-based organizations.

NYCALI practitioners include 1,559 paid full- and part-time staff and 622

volunteers, working at more than 250 locations citywide. Staff regularly participate in professional development and training offered through the Literacy Assistance Center (LAC) and the New York City Professional Development Consortium (NYCPDC), one of ten regional consortia in New York State funded by the New York State Education Department (NYSED), and through training activities sponsored by their own literacy provider agency (LPA).

The Literacy Assistance Center provides professional development, technical assistance, and research and data collection to all NYCALI programs. The LAC manages and maintains ALIES, the NYCALI management information system, which contains demographic, enrollment and pre- and post-test scores on all participating students. The LAC also houses a referral hotline for New Yorkers seeking instruction or volunteer opportunities. Over half of the callers to the hotline are seeking information about GED instruction and testing. The LAC



publishes the *Literacy Update*, a newsletter informing the field about upcoming staff development events, resource and funding opportunities, and recent developments in policy and practice. Visitors to the LAC's Dan Rabideau Clearinghouse may borrow instructional, research, and reading materials for student as well as professional use.

Many facets of NYCALI elude capture by numbers. Thus, the data sections of this report are followed by descriptions of the range of services offered at each program. These snapshots are excerpted from the final reports of the literacy providing agencies, submitted to the City and State at the end of each fiscal year. The narrative sections of these reports focus on instructional methodologies, effective practices, and staff development initiatives, as well as on the successes and challenges faced by programs during FY98. Final reports describe the ways in which programs and staff have organized and redesigned their services to enhance their capacity, raise standards, report results and respond to the economic, technological, and demographic changes of the preceding year.

This report is ultimately the students' story—as students move closer to their goals, they embody the purpose and practice of lifelong learning. They model for all of us the determination and effort essential to full participation in the political, economic, and cultural life of our fast-changing city. NYCALI aims to support all adults in making progress toward their goals.

New York City Adult Literacy Initiative

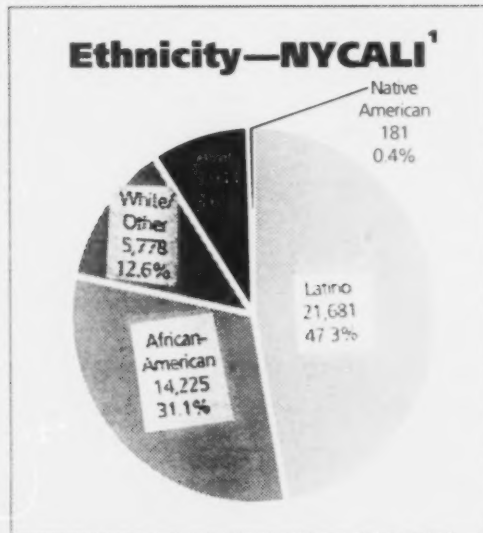
An overview

The 1997–98 program year marked a 12% increase in the number of students served in NYCALI programs, which rose from 41,932 in FY97 to 47,073 in FY98. This increase is shared among men and women, the employed and unemployed, and across ethnic groups. It continues an upward trend begun in FY97. During FY98, CUNY and DYCD received additional Adult Education Act funding. One result was that these two agencies demonstrated the greatest gain in enrollment among NYCALI providers. This funding increase – coupled with factors such as the increased desire among students to acquire technological literacy and learn literacy skills applicable to the workplace, as well as the rising demand for English language instruction among the city's increasing immigrant population – are the primary factors explaining the 12% rise in total NYCALI student population in FY98.

The rates of increase in enrollment varied among the six literacy provider agencies that together offer NYCALI programs. The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) experienced a 29% increase in its student population between FY97 and FY98—the greatest increase among all the LPA's. The Board of Education experienced a 4.5% increase in its student population between FY97 and FY98. The City University system showed a 22% increase in its student population and, among the library providers, The New York Public Library experienced a 17% increase between the two fiscal years while the student population at the other two systems remained constant.

Ethnicity, Gender, Age, and Employment Status

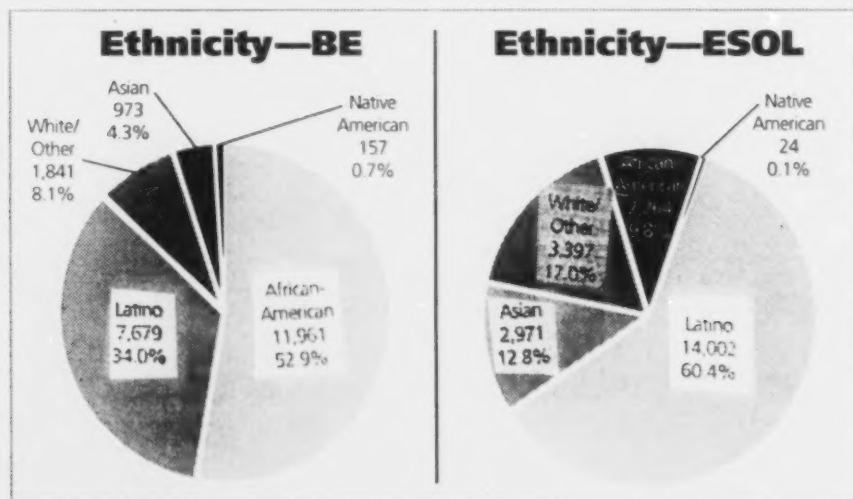
Latino students are the largest ethnic group served in NYCALI programs,



constituting 47.3% of the total student population. This percentage has remained constant for the past three fiscal years. African-American/Afro-Caribbean learners account for just under a third of all NYCALI participants.

Among students of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), 60.4% are Latino, 17% are white, and 9.8% are African-

American. During FY98, the percentage of Asian ESOL students increased from 11.7% to 12.8%, while the percentages of other ethnic groups decreased slightly.



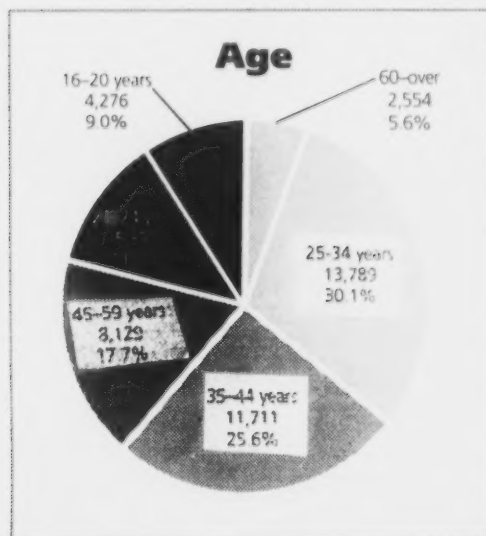
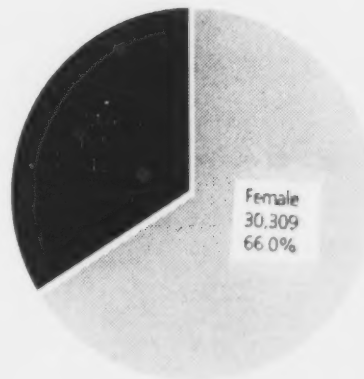
¹ Ethnicity categories used in NYCALI are based on federal race and Hispanic origin definitions. They encompass the following backgrounds. *African-American* includes any people of African ancestry; *Asian* are those with ancestry in continental Asia excluding the Middle East but including the Pacific Islands; *Native American* are all descendants of indigenous peoples of the Americas, including Eskimo and Aleut; *Latino/a* includes all whose national background is Spanish-speaking countries and people of Puerto Rican origin; and *White/Other* includes all others, including people who consider themselves of multiple race or ethnicity.

In BE classes, more than half, or 52.9%, are African-American, while a third are Latino. Only 8.1% are white, and 4.4% are Asian. Between FY97 and FY98, there was a 2% decrease in the percentage of African-American BE students, while the numbers of Asians, whites, and Latinos showed moderate increases.

Two-thirds of NYCALI participants are women. The percentage of men increased this fiscal year from 32.8% to 33.8%, while the percentage of women decreased from 67.2% in FY97 to 66.0% in FY98.

More than half of all NYCALI participants, 55.7%, are between 25 and 44 years

Gender



old. This represents a 2.3% decrease from FY97. However, the majority of students continue to be those in their prime working and parenting years. Those from 45 to over 60 constitute 23.3% of students in programs, constituting a 17.5% increase over FY97. Twenty-one percent are between the ages of 16 and 24.

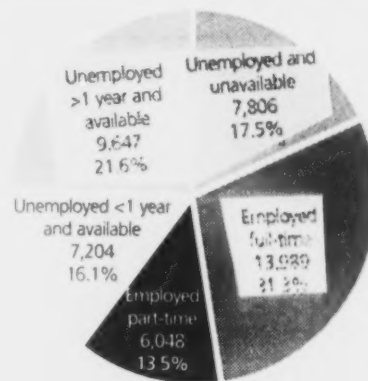
The number of employed NYCALI participants rose from 41.6% in FY97 to 44.8% in FY98, an increase felt by programs as they adjusted schedules to allow for more workers to attend class. The percentage of those employed part-time rose from 12.4% to 13.5%, while those employed full-time increased from 29.2% to 31.3% of the total NYCALI population. This increase represents 2,288 additional full-time and 1,091 additional part-time workers enrolled in programs in FY98 over FY97.

Of the total number of unemployed NYCALI participants during FY98, less than one third (31.6%) said they were unavailable for full- or part-time employment. Of those available for work, 16.1% had been out of work for less than a year, while 21.6% had been unemployed for longer. Although the percentages in all categories of the unemployed have decreased over the past fiscal year, it is important to note that, due to the rise in the total number of students served, absolute numbers of students out of work have risen or have not greatly decreased. For example, 7,161 students, or 18%, were unemployed and unavailable for work in FY97. In FY98, 7,806 learners, or 17.5%, were in this category.

In another category of the unemployed—those available for work and unemployed less than one year—there were 6,279 NYCALI participants in FY97 and 7,204 in FY98, reflecting a 12% increase. These figures indicate that programs are serving a higher percentage of employed students as more individuals enter the job market.

Employment status

Status of students at time of enrollment



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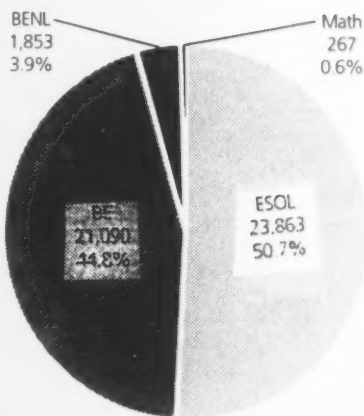
Instructional Offerings and Enrollment

NYCALI programs serve a diverse population of students who return to school to make changes in many aspects of their lives. The curriculum and instruction offered reflect students' interests, needs, and goals. Where students are working toward employment, reading and writing may center around job-related tasks such as searching the help-wanted ads or gathering information about the qualifications necessary to enter a certain occupation. Other students may want to focus on helping their children with their homework and becoming more involved in their children's education. Based on the belief that parents are their children's first teachers, programs often include activities such as storytelling, reading aloud, and using computers in ways that allow parents and their children to share activities together. Other students may desire to prepare for the citizenship exam or pass the GED. Instruction in test-taking skills as well as in specific subject areas such as science, history, civics, and math form the framework of instruction in these classes.

The following types of instruction are offered through NYCALI: Basic Education (BE); English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL); Math; Basic Education in the Native Language (BENL); and General Educational Development (GED) test preparation. While GED instruction is funded by NYCALI, statistics on GED are maintained by NYSED and not the ALIES system; therefore, they are not included in this report.

Between FY97 and FY98, the ESOL population increased by 2,899, so that just over half of all NYCALI participants were in ESOL classes (50.7%), while 44.8% were enrolled in BE instruction. Continued immigration to New York City results in the high demand for ESOL services. During FY98, the percentages of NYCALI participants enrolled in BENL and separate math classes remained constant with those enrolled in FY97. While the percentage of students enrolled exclusively in math classes is low, numeracy skills are frequently

Enrollment by instructional offering



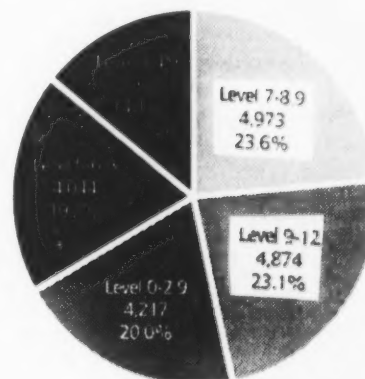
incorporated into all other types of instruction as students require basic math proficiency to enter the job market.

Basic Education (BE) instruction aims to improve the reading, writing, and communication skills of students in English. BE students are assessed at intake, using a range of qualitative and quantitative measures including the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE), interviews, writing samples, and informal

reading inventories. They are then placed in classes or small groups appropriate to their levels. Instructional levels are assigned primarily according to the TABE and approximate English reading grade level equivalents of 0-2.9, 3-4.9, 5-6.9, 7-8.9 and 9-12.

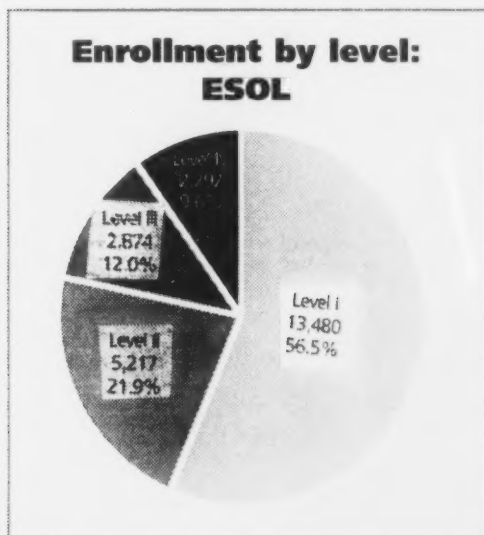
In FY98, 34% of the BE population was reading between 0 and 4.9, which remains consistent with the number from the previous fiscal year. Forty-six percent of the NYCALI BE population is reading between 7-12 grade level equivalents, a decrease of 2% from FY97. However, these numbers indicate that many

Enrollment by level: BE



students are attending classes at the point in their educational pursuit where they are considering or are participating in GED instruction.

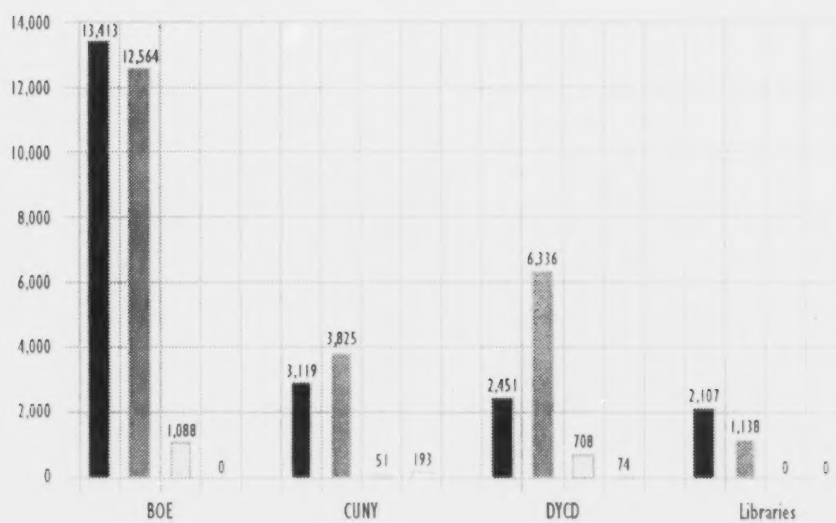
Classes offering English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provide instruction in English speaking and comprehension. Students are placed in one of four instructional levels using the New York State Placement Test (NYSPLACE).



Among ESOL students, 78% are in the two lowest levels of instruction. Less than a quarter (21.6%) are at Levels III and IV combined. This distribution has remained consistent for the past three fiscal years.

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Among the NYCALI providers, the Board of Education serves 63% of the BE population and 52% of the ESOL population. DYCD is the second-largest provider of ESOL instruction, serving 27% of the total ESOL population. DYCD is also the largest provider of BENL instruction, serving 38.2% of NYCALI's total BENL population. The CUNY system—with almost 7,200 students—serves 15% of the overall NYCALI population.



Enrollment by LPA and instructional type

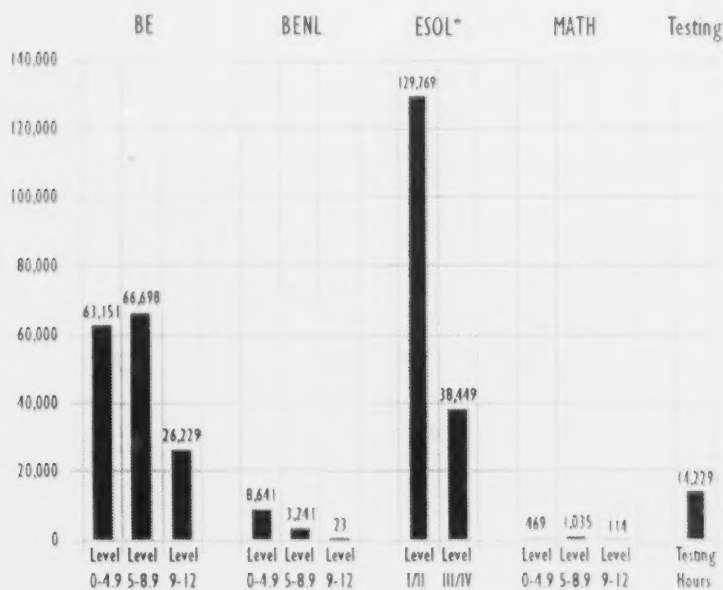
Number of students in each LPA

■ BE ■ ESOL ■ BENL ■ Math

Instructional Hours and Contact Hours

The total number of hours of instruction *provided* by a program—time spent by teachers and volunteer tutors in classrooms, learning labs, and individual or small-group instruction—are *instructional hours*. The total number of hours that students *attend* instruction, sometimes called “seat time,” are *contact hours*. For example, one session of a two-hour class attended by 20 students would total two instructional hours and 40 contact hours.

The total number of instructional hours, including testing hours, offered in NYCALI programs during FY98 was 352,048, a 22% increase from FY97. The majority of instructional hours (57%) continued to be offered at the lowest levels of instruction, fulfilling the mission of NYCALI to concentrate services in the



Instructional hours by instructional offering by level

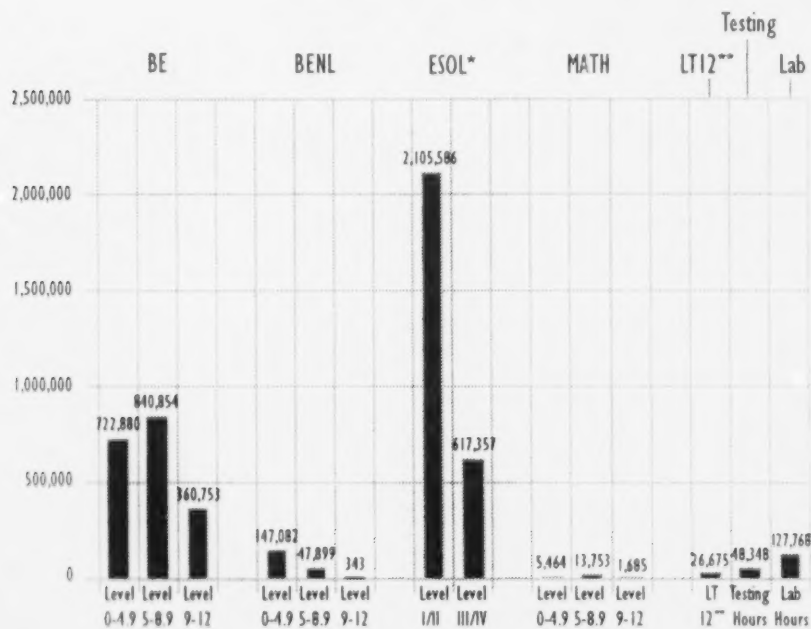
Totals: BE 156,078; BENL 11,905; ESOL 168,218; Math 1,618; Testing 14,229

*Queens Borough Public Library ESOL is counted in Level I/II only

areas of greatest need. A combined total of 202,030 instructional hours were offered at the 0-4.9 levels in BE, ESOL Levels I and II, BENL and math.

The number of students served per instructional hour at the lowest level of BE (0-4.9) was 11, down from 12 in FY97, while at the 5-8.9 grade level, the number served remained stable (13 in FY97 and 98). ESOL instruction at all levels also stayed the same at 16 per hour, while the number of students per instructional hour in BENL services rose from 15 to 16 during FY98. In math classes, 13 students were served per instructional hour, a decrease from last year's 14.

The total number of contact hours during which students attended classes in FY98 was 5,066,447, a 23% increase from the total contact hours in FY97.



Contact hours by instructional offering by level

Totals: BE 1,924,487; BENL 195,324; ESOL 2,722,943; Math 20,902;

LT12 26,675; Testing 48,348; Lab 127,768

*Queens Borough Public Library ESOL is counted in Level I/II only

**Note: LT12 = Total number of hours among students participating in programs for less than 12 hours

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This total includes 1,924,487 hours of BE, 2,722,943 of ESOL, 195,324 of BENL, and 20,902 of math. In each of these instructional categories, contact hours increased from FY97. Increases were greatest for BE, at 27%, and for math, at 24%.

The number of hours on average a student attends instruction per year is calculated by dividing the number of total contact hours by the number of students receiving each instructional service.

The number of contact hours per students reflects a slight downward shift in all four kinds of instruction offered by NYCALI; among BE students at the lowest level, contact hours per student dropped from 109 in FY97 to 100 in FY98. In the next level of BE, the figure went from 96 to 93. Among ESOL students, those in Levels I and II averaged 113 contact hours in FY98, the same number reported for the previous year. For ESOL students in Levels III and IV, contact hours per student dropped from 124 to 120. Some programs reported that the reduction in contact hours reflected a shift toward shorter, more targeted cycles of instruction.

Funding

A total of \$31,526,230 was provided to NYCALI through the Mayor's Office of Adult Literacy and the New York State Education Department. This represents a significant increase from last year's funding of \$30,000,000.

Of this total, \$28,788,426 went to the City University of New York, the NYC Board of Education, and the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development, which in turn allocates funds to community-based organizations.

Funding for the three library systems—The New York Public Library, Queens Borough Public Library, and Brooklyn Public Library—comes solely from the NYC Mayor's Office of Adult Literacy and totaled \$2,737,804. These funds supported direct services to students, including computer instruction, as well as

development of materials collections available for deposit loan to other programs and acquisition of materials for the lifelong learning collections in branch libraries.

Within NYCALI programs, the average annual cost per student was \$669.73 in FY98, up 3.6% from FY97. Each instructional hour cost \$89.55, while cost per contact hour was \$6.22. Compared to FY97, instructional-hour costs rose 5% and amount spent per contact hour decreased by about 4%.

Teaching Toward the 21st Century

NYCALI programs respond to change

In *Beyond 2000: Future Directions for Adult Education*, author Thomas Sticht discusses current trends that are likely to have a significant impact on adult education. Seen through the lens of Sticht's report, NYCALI practitioners are well on their way to the next century. Over the past few years, NYCALI teachers, program managers, and other staff have been asked to craft programmatic responses to many major societal trends, including the transformation of the welfare-delivery system, changes in the workplace, and the "explosive growth of telecommunications and computer technologies" (Sticht, 1998:1). During this same period, they have also adapted to changes in students' needs and goals and encountered increasing demands for accountability regarding the outcomes of their work. Teachers, tutors, and administrators have had to learn to use technology for instructional purposes. They have had to adapt the scheduling and content of services to reflect the employment needs and Work Experience Program (WEP) participation requirements of many students. Simultaneously, practitioners have had to learn to plan and assess their work in accordance with new learning standards for adult education and have had to acquire new instructional methodologies that address teaching students with learning disabilities and diverse learning styles.

Below are examples that illustrate the responsiveness of programs and practitioners to adapting to rapidly changing purposes, tools, standards, and styles of learning.

Professional Development in NYCALI

NYCALI teachers, tutors and program managers benefit from NYCALI's professional development system—recognized as one of the strongest and best coordinated in the nation. One library-literacy program director notes:

The high quality of all levels of staff is extraordinary. All staff eagerly take part in staff development and apply the skills they learn. They consistently evaluate the effectiveness of all initiatives as they impact on students' learning. . . . Our staff encourages and models the active learning environment that the program strives to provide for its students.

The ability of teachers to see themselves as lifelong learners, participating and helping shape staff development in NYCALI, is perhaps the single most important determinant of a program's ability to respond to the needs of students and to the changes in the larger society. Through staff development, teachers acquire and share new approaches to teaching and learning and ensure that these changes permeate the program and instructional practices.

At one CUNY program in Manhattan, for example, special projects and new initiatives revolve around the expertise of teachers and their continuing professional development. The director states:

The strengths of our program center on our teachers. To meet our goal to provide first-rate instruction, our staff is our most important resource. We have a staff with considerable experience, program continuity, and established collaborative work patterns. Teachers in our program take their expertise to the wider literacy community and return to our program with fresh instructional ideas to develop a continuous loop of deepening staff development.

The feedback loop between individual programs and the wider NYCALI community is critical to this dynamic. Four staff members at this CUNY program are active participants in the citywide Math Exchange Group, and one of them provided a series of math workshops for other CUNY instructors. The LAC and NYCPDC are key facilitators in linking programs to the rich network of expertise that exists among New York City providers, and to the resources and initiatives available throughout the city and the state.

The role of staff in organizational planning also helps ensure the implementation of new initiatives. At a Manhattan community-based program, full- and part-time staff went on a weeklong retreat to establish shared goals and objectives at the beginning of the program year. Then, throughout the year, teachers at this program visited each other's classes and offered comments and feedback. At the end of the year, a two-day conference involving staff and students served as the basis for program evaluation.

A CUNY college in Queens also takes a collaborative approach to staff development. Team teaching, shared curriculum development, and planning committees provide a structure for teacher collaboration. In addition, teachers at this site have formed a Reading Circle in which members discussed theoretical and instructional literacy texts and their relevance to the students in their program.

A diverse range of topics is addressed through staff development. At one Brooklyn community-based organization, for example, staff attended workshops that enhanced their skills in conflict resolution, employment acquisition, child-care information, case management, tenants rights, welfare/Medicaid income, and citizenship.

In FY98—to further expand the professional-development opportunities for teachers—planning began on a NYCALI Pre-Service Institute. The goals of the proposed institute are to introduce all newly hired practitioners to the NYCALI system and resources; to present effective teaching practices, and to augment existing

pre-service trainings offered by individual LPAs. The planning committee was comprised of representatives from each LPA and was a collaboration among the New York State Education Department and the NYCPDC.

Staff development serves as a vehicle for change in program practices and directions. At its best, it encourages linkages among NYCALI programs and between NYCALI programs and community partners. Staff development, and the ready response of NYCALI practitioners, has been the conduit for new knowledge about learning disabilities, multiple intelligence theory, technology, and learning standards, enabling these ideas to take root and influence the way programs deliver services to diverse and changing populations.

The Incorporation of Technology

The incorporation of technology into NYCALI programs has taken place largely over the last five years. In April, 1998 NYSED made ALE monies available to each literacy provider for the specific purpose of upgrading computer technology. As a result, many programs purchased new hardware and software or improved upon their existing systems. They also began to introduce more professional development initiatives designed to increase technological proficiency among staff. The application of technology to literacy learning has been a process inspired by the enthusiasm of students and nurtured by the creativity of staff. One CUNY college in Queens describes its use of technology as follows:

Language and literacy skills are enhanced as students enter the world of technology. Instruction in the lab focuses on writing and the writing process, using the word processor as a stimulus for student work. . . . [Students] are simultaneously learning valuable computer skills while improving their writing, reading and language skills. . . .

In this program, students learn to use several popular software packages, as well as printers, scanners, and image writers. An instructor has designed and implemented a curriculum that "seamlessly integrates technology with academics."

Technology use within NYCALI spans a continuum, from connecting students to other learners across the country to publishing student writing to supporting theme-based instruction. Technology is used for administrative purposes such as maintaining students records. One community-based program in Brooklyn reported that, during FY98, an expanded focus on technology and the use of multimedia for classroom and distance learning was "this year's most exciting new program accomplishment." This program also collaborated with DYCD to use Crossroads Cafe (a video-based ESOL instructional series with accompanying workbooks at three levels of proficiency) to begin a distance learning project for ESOL learners unable to attend classes regularly. Two distance learning groups were established, composed of learners who met with a teacher once a week but did most of their learning at home.

At one library program, staff development occurs in committees that work on small-group projects. In FY98, the Technology Committee focused on family learning and received a grant to buy laptop computers for its Share-A-Lap program. Share-A-Lap is an intergenerational family-literacy project that encourages parents and caregivers to interact with their children by learning computer skills and playing educational computer games. The Technology Committee also researched current adult basic education sites on the Web and began to develop a Web page to be used for intergenerational technology activities as well as a showcase for student work.

Another library system described the upgrading of hardware and software as a major accomplishment of FY98. Installation of new computers and the purchase of software tailored to the specific populations of each community has sparked an influx of potential students to the program.

As the above examples demonstrate, many NYCALI staff and programs have moved from being new consumers of technology to sophisticated purchasers, users, and designers of applications that address particular program needs. They are ready to explore the potential of technology for reaching a wider range of adult learners in greater numbers and to expand instruction beyond the walls of their classrooms.

Student Population Shifts and Program Responses

During FY98, some NYCALI providers observed changes in student populations, including a greater number of participants who had to schedule their learning around work and the Work Experience Program (WEP is the work experience component of Welfare Reform Legislation). For example, one LPA revised its recruitment strategies to attract learners not on public assistance after experiencing a sharp drop in participation by those now required to participate in WEP. Some programs found that they were serving more individuals with learning and other disabilities and more newly arrived immigrants. Others experienced a rise in the number of out-of-school youth seeking services. Although overall NYCALI demographics, as discussed earlier, do not reflect dramatic citywide changes, programs that do experience population shifts have had to adapt their services to the needs of new groups.

At a Manhattan CUNY college that serves a high number of out-of-school youth, staff discovered that a disproportionate number in this population were dropping out of the program because of their lack of readiness for GED instruction. Many had been advised by their former school counselors to enroll in a GED program, yet the college's assessment measures determined that less than half of these students were adequately prepared for GED coursework. The program

responded by offering intensive preparatory instruction at two sites. In addition, arrangements were made with other agencies to provide the students with child care for their children, as it was determined that this was preventing students from attending classes regularly. During FY98, six classes had such arrangements, and the program reported an increase in attendance.

In a Manhattan community-based program, there was a decline in BE enrollment and attendance due to changes in work schedules or, among public-assistance recipients, to assignment to the Work Experience Program. In response to the needs of students who often do not qualify for publicly funded job-training programs based on their low literacy or English language skills, this program has developed its own job-training programs. They have also established links with citywide job services through a Parent Resource Center, and developed extensive referral networks to other job-training organizations appropriate for their population. The program has increased the flexibility of its scheduling and now offers Saturday as well as evening classes. Finally, this site developed a family day-care network that provides child care during evenings and weekends, enabling parents of young children to enroll in Basic Education and ESOL classes.

The experiences of these programs were shared throughout NYCALI as programs made adjustments to accommodate the needs of a changing student population. A Brooklyn neighborhood center observed that many of its learners were immigrant grandparents who needed to pick up grandchildren from school and so began ESOL classes that ended by two in the afternoon. "The biggest problem we face," noted the director, "is a continuing increase in an elderly immigrant population desperate for ESOL services in order to pass written tests and oral Immigration and Naturalization Service interviews. Although we have conservatively estimated the disabilities of our elderly ESOL population, many express difficulty hearing and seeing." In response, the program has increased immigration counseling services, provided clients with instructional mono- and

bilingual print, audio, and video materials to help them continue learning at home, and developed a citizenship preparation curriculum.

At a Manhattan community organization, the student population in day classes has changed significantly since the introduction of the Work Experience Program. Many students are now attached to shelters, hospitals, or probation offices, requiring additional liaisons with these institutions. In grappling with these new demands, this program established links with agencies that provide individual student evaluations and recommendations for teaching students with learning disabilities. The counselor on staff has developed relationships with colleagues at the institutions connected to the students, and the staff is wrestling with protocols for the necessary paperwork and monitoring of students with multiple needs.

One program that both serves students with learning disabilities and serves as a resource for other NYCALI providers attracts many adults who have experienced difficulties in traditional programs. The program has developed a number of special kinds of instruction to address the needs of this population. The most successful of these include: a business-math class, a multisensory phonics class for dyslexic students, a life-skills reading program, and a miniseries on memory, problem solving, and calculator math. This program also provides literacy services through alliances with substance-abuse programs. It reports that most students show significant measurable progress on formal testing after six months in their programs, and many progress to the next level of instruction.

Another example of the increased focus on learning disabilities within NYCALI during FY98 was represented by the efforts of staff at one library program to deepen their own understanding of learning disabilities. These efforts included attending workshops, lectures, seminars, and college courses. As a result, the staff is better able to support volunteers working with students with a variety of learning needs and issues. The tutor training manual is being revised to reflect learning styles theory and practice, and to offer specific methods for addressing individual

learning preferences. A special class for hearing-impaired learners led by a hearing-impaired staff member and books on tape for visually impaired students have also been developed. The library's learning centers feature multimedia computers whose sound reinforcement and other adaptations facilitate learning by persons with disabilities. Four of the centers are accessible to those with mobility impairments, and all centers refer students to agencies that offer specialized services, such as VESID, mental-health providers, and other community agencies. Finally, persons with disabilities are encouraged to volunteer and tutor other students with learning disabilities. Several have already taken advantage of this opportunity.

Over the past few years, the National Institute for Literacy has funded the National Adult Literacy and Learning Disabilities Center to conduct research on learning disabilities and literacy and to develop training and materials for adult-education teachers. The Center estimates that as many as 50% to 80% of adults in Basic Education classes have some form of learning disability (1995). The result of this effort is *Bridges to Practice*, an initiative designed to train practitioners in effective instructional approaches for teaching students with learning disabilities. In FY98, plans were introduced to deliver training to a group of practitioners selected from agencies across the country who will become certified *Bridges* trainers, enabling them to disseminate effective practices based on the *Bridges to Practice* model.

Retention

For many adults, the demands of combining education with family and work responsibilities—along with a history of school failure—often make it difficult to persist in their education. In addition, in many areas, there is a shortage of adequate literacy and support services. New work requirements for public assistance recipients and a robust economy offering greater opportunity for employment have

added to the challenge of retention. NYCALI programs have developed innovative responses to retention issues, including experimenting with more flexible program scheduling. A Manhattan CUNY community college, for example, initiated five classes purposefully designed to be shorter than 100 hours in duration, and began a pilot program in Washington Heights with classes ranging from 24 to 96 hours.

At a program in a Manhattan settlement house, staff noticed that new students were most likely to drop out during the first month of attendance. In response, they began to closely monitor attendance during this critical period, and to work with students to maintain their motivation for participating. At another community-based program, retention issues were addressed by offering services targeted to specific needs, such as: child care during evening classes, additional nights of tutoring in math and writing, a library of interesting books to borrow, and a student council that provides an avenue for a student voice in program planning. The latter developed a sense of community among students that has had a positive influence on retention.

At library literacy programs, access to technology is an important retention strategy, because of the high interest and motivation of adult learners seeking computer skills and knowledge. In addition, these library programs retain and attract students through increased hours of instruction at Learning Centers, and with specialized workshops on issues that address learner needs, such as housing, AIDS, and job-search skills.

In addition to telephone campaigns by the program counselor to reach students who have stopped coming to class, a CUNY community college encourages classes to write letters to absent students and to form buddy systems among learners. Class members are responsible for calling a "buddy" if he or she is absent, and classes have sent letters with such sentiments as: "We miss you. The class isn't the same without you."

At another CUNY college program, attendance agreements with students

require a commitment to attend 85% of scheduled classes. Staff find that only a small number of students fail to live up to these agreements and that counselors are often able to help them resolve the problems interfering with attendance.

Motivation for consistent attendance and perseverance does not rest on the agreements alone, however; according to the program's director, "We believe that the excellent quality of instruction we provide and our responsiveness to our students' needs are our strongest ways to improve retention."

Learning Standards and Assessment

Efforts to improve program quality, through work on assessment and evaluation, have been ongoing in NYCALI programs. The publication of *Looking at Literacy: Indicators of Program Quality* in 1996, for example, was the result of collaboration among partners of the New York/New York Adult Education and Training Alliance and included representatives of adult education and training providers in New York City and State. Funders at the City and State levels provided support. This publication defines the characteristics of a quality literacy program in many areas, including teaching, learning and assessment, staffing, professional development, and student support services; it has been used by programs to guide their efforts toward continuous improvement.

In FY98, the release of the *Adult Education Resource Guide (AERG)* and *Learning Standards* by the New York State Department of Education deepened the involvement of NYCALI programs in addressing instruction and assessment as they prepare to meet State standards for adult education. The AERG was developed by adult educators from around the state who pooled their expertise to develop learning outcomes and associated curricula in four areas of adult education: English Language Arts; Mathematics; English for Speakers of Other Languages; and General Educational Development (GED) test preparation.

Planning for training in the use of the AERG was initiated by the New York City Professional Development Consortium in FY98, with full implementation targeted for FY99. The NYCPDC intends to offer an introduction to these materials to practitioners throughout New York City. In addition, as part of the Pre-Service Institute, newly hired literacy practitioners will be introduced to the AERG; they will then receive follow-up training at their individual LPAs.

As the AERG and Learning Standards begin to have an impact on teaching and learning, existing instruction and assessment methodologies can be used to measure progress toward the benchmarks and learner goals identified by NYSED in this document. NYCALI-funded programs are required to use either the TABE or NYSPLACE test; in addition, programs are expected to employ alternative assessment measures including portfolios, informal reading inventories and writing samples to assess student outcomes. For example, the New York City Board of Education uses the Monthly Student Achievement Self Assessment (MSASA), cloze readings, writing samples, and a math assessment to create a portrait of a student's development over time. Staff then analyze all assessment results to determine a learner's readiness for the next level of instruction.

At a CUNY program, in a community college, staff have developed a standard rubric for portfolio assessment. In 1994, this program was granted permission by the Mayor's Office of Adult Literacy to use portfolios as a means of assessing progress in lieu of the TABE test. Active use of and student participation in portfolio assessment has continued to this day. Students establish learning and practice goals for both in and out of school, and use learning logs, reading and writing logs, portfolios, and progress reports to document and reflect on their achievements. Programs utilizing portfolios as an assessment measure have been grappling with a number of challenges: how to capture the data; how to analyze it quantitatively; and how to interpret definitions of progress across programs.

For many programs, capturing the relationship between achievements inside and outside the classroom poses a significant challenge. Toward this end, a Manhattan organization that specializes in serving adults with learning disabilities has created a learner-assessment instrument administered at the end of the program year. This checklist of activities taking place outside of class is a self-assessment tool that allows learners to rate their progress in areas such as community involvement and family literacy. This program also has its own outcomes and expectations, based on the population it serves, including: enhanced understanding of one's learning disability and learning style; improved ability using learning materials, equipment and technology; and development of new strategies and skills for learning.

As practitioners and funders come to consensus on benchmarks, rubrics, and standards for adult learning, and as training in assessment indicators and procedures reaches teachers and tutors, NYCALI programs will be better able to assess, document and report the results of their instruction. Perhaps more importantly, as learner goals are articulated through assessment processes and measures, instruction becomes more closely tied to outcomes that matter in students' lives and that have a noticeable impact on their families, communities, and workplaces. As this happens, adult education will be better able to meet changing funding mandates and to clearly articulate and report on its role in improving the quality of the workforce and strengthening families.

Learner Gains and Achievements

Program outcomes

NYCALI programs are currently asked to report learner accomplishments as measured by gains in standardized test scores (TABE and NYSPLACE) and other academic indicators and by the impact of increased literacy and English language skills on such areas as citizenship, family literacy, employment, and voter registration. While often difficult to capture, programs do make efforts to report on progress in these areas. At a Manhattan community-based organization, for example, copies of voter-registration forms, pay stubs, letters, and employer business cards are collected as evidence of student accomplishments.

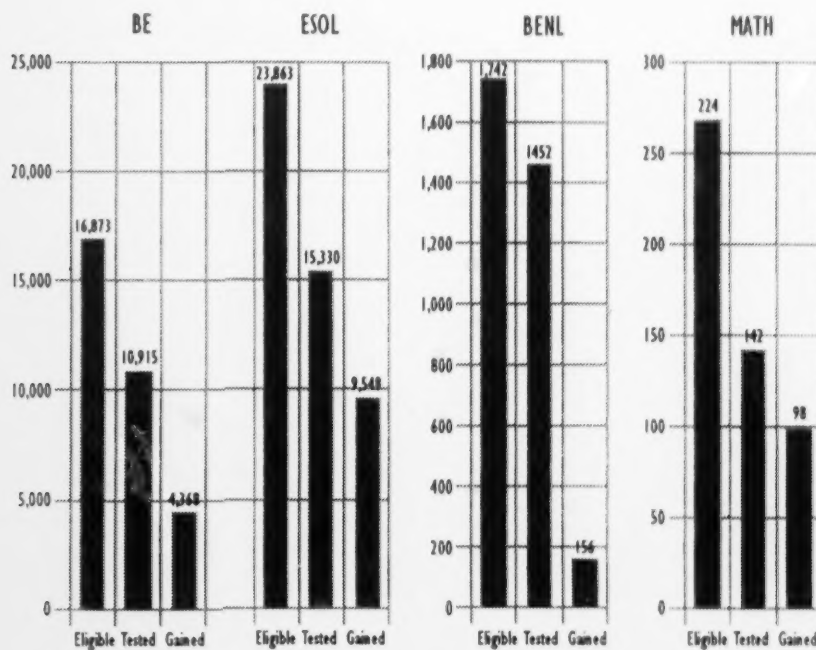
Program summaries—such as the following from a Brooklyn CUNY program—indicate the breadth of student accomplishments. Accomplishments are self-reported through a variety of assessment tools (e.g. surveys, self-check questionnaires and teacher interviews with students) :

We are pleased with, and proud of, our students' achievements and outcomes. During this program year, 58 students received U.S. citizenship, 19 registered to vote or voted for the first time, 54 obtained a job, 28 got a better job or salary increase, 6 were removed from public assistance, 25 completed BE and enrolled in GED instruction, and 25 received a high school equivalency diploma. Also, it is clear that our program supports the learning of parents and families: 135 are parents who helped children with their homework, 132 read to their children, 133 better understand school communications, 20 volunteered in their children's schools. Additionally, because of our efforts to create courses where students learn content material as they are improving their reading and English skills, 293 reported improving their competency in government and law, 146 in occupational knowledge, and 132 in health care. We are delighted that so many of our students are using their new skills to tangibly improve their lives.

Academic Achievements

Of the 21,090 students enrolled in BE instruction, 80% or 16,873 were post-test eligible. Out of those post-test eligible, 10,915 or 65% were post-tested. Of the 10,915 post-tested, 40% demonstrated gain.

Among NYCALI's 23,863 ESOL students, 64% or 15,330 were post-tested. Out of those post-tested, 62.3% demonstrated gain. Of a total 1,853 students enrolled in BENL classes, 1,452 or 78% were post-tested and 10.7% demonstrated gain. Two hundred and sixty-seven students were enrolled in math classes, of which 53% or 142 were post-tested. Among those post-tested 69%



Post-test results*

Percentage post-tested out of total eligible

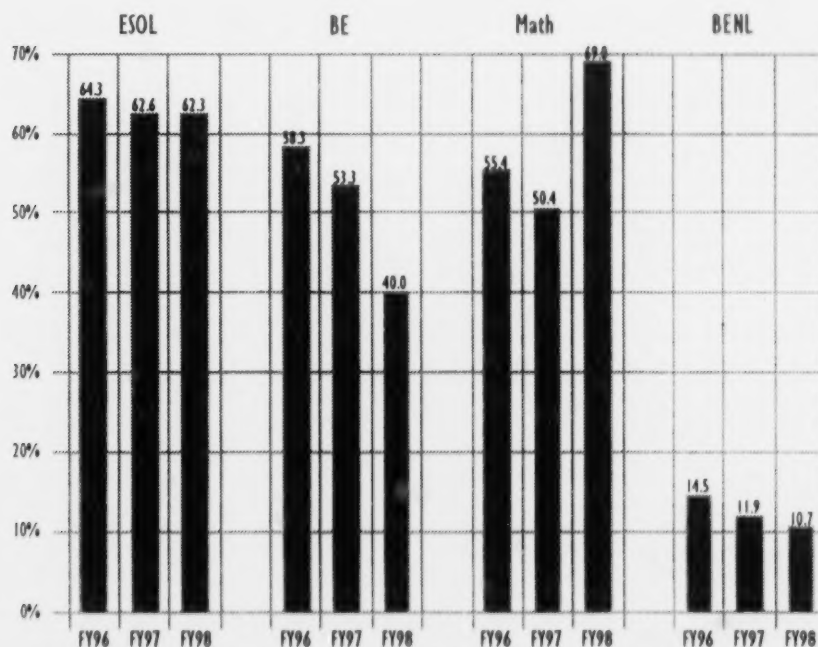
BE 64.7%; ESOL 64.2%; BENL 83.3%; Math 53.2%

*All students enrolled in ESOL, BENL and math are post-test-eligible.

demonstrated gain.

Much has been written about the limits of standardized tests in capturing progress among adult learners, particularly those at the lowest levels, where NYCALI concentrates its services. Accordingly, NYCALI programs also report academic progress within instructional level, movement to the next level of instruction, and movement from ESOL to BE and from BE to GED. By these indicators, the following accomplishments were documented through a range of self-reporting instruments including surveys, questionnaires and teacher observation during FY98:

- 40% of students progressed within their current type and level of instruction.
- 27.2% completed their current level of instruction, including 2,178 who passed the GED predictor.
- 10.3% moved to the next level of instruction.
- 2,153 obtained a high school equivalency diploma.
- 310 attained a high school diploma.
- 12,929, or 27.5% of all NYCALI participants, achieved benchmarks such as moving from ESOL to ABE or GED instruction, moving from ABE into GED classes, being referred for GED testing, or moving to postsecondary instruction or to other kinds of education and training programs.



3-year comparisons in student achievement

Percentage of students showing gain among total students post-tested

Employment Outcomes

Programs collect data on employment outcomes, including job attainment, promotions, removal from public assistance, and improved skills at a current job. These data will become more important as adult education becomes integrated into the comprehensive workforce preparation system. However, collecting this information can be difficult and costly. Learners may leave programs because they have found jobs, but programs may not be aware of this and may have difficulty contacting former students.

Involvement of NYCALI programs in job-readiness activities and in preparation for specific kinds of work is widespread. A Manhattan community-based

organization, for example, offers a child-care training program and a program for women interested in starting their own businesses. Many programs employ job developers and have established partnerships with local employers. At a Bronx community-based program, the job developer on staff helps beginning ESOL students identify jobs for which candidates need little English; this job developer also helps students assess their goals, strengths, and areas in need of improvement. He instructs learners in filling out job applications in English and works with them on career assessment. This job developer regularly holds workshops for students, along with Friday "Job Search Sessions" for all students interested in employment.

These efforts by NYCALI providers have paid off in employment outcomes. In FY98, a total of 6,227 learners reported obtaining a job, while 3,458 upgraded their skills on current jobs. NYCALI participants who said they got a better job or a promotion totaled 1,852. Together, those reporting job outcomes compose 25% of the total student population. (For reference, recall that 44.8% reported being employed full- or part-time, and of those unemployed, close to 38% were available for work.) In addition, 330 individuals said they had left public assistance, while 605 had their public assistance rebudgeted to reflect earned income.

Family Literacy

Many NYCALI programs offer family literacy curricula and services. A community-based program in East Harlem, for example, has established partnerships with the Board of Education, the local community school district, and a large union-based education, training, and job-placement organization. Together they have formed a Parent Resource Center, designed to offer education, training, and employment services to parents. Similarly, a Brooklyn community-based NYCALI program collaborates with a local medical center on family literacy projects that encompass ESOL and basic-skills instruction, child care, life-skills workshops, and interactive

learning experiences for parents and children.

Among NYCALI students, 44% are parents of school-age children, and 15% are single parents. During FY98, 18% of NYCALI learners with children reported reading to their children, while 5,885 individuals (13%) said they helped children with homework; 5,331 learners (11%) said they had better understood communication from the child's school, 1,787 (4%) volunteered in local schools, and 3,903 communicated with school staff (8%). Among NYCALI students, 2,589 parents (5%) said they had increased their economic self-sufficiency.

Civic and Community Participation

Active citizenship is often a by-product as learners gain literacy skills and improve their ability to act on and voice their opinions and ideas. Many NYCALI programs focus their curricula on areas such as the citizenship process or on better understanding of the workings of government at the local, state, and federal levels. This may involve student visits or letters to offices of elected officials. One community-based program incorporates community issues into its technology labs, where students are establishing an online community forum to discuss policy issues.

As a result of such learning activities, many NYCALI participants reported increased civic and community participation. During FY98, 2,161 NYCALI students registered to vote or voted for the first time, while 1,028 applied for or received U.S. citizenship. Many more improved their competency in areas related to their ability to be full participants in the lives of their community, city, state, and nation. For example, 29,797, or 63%, reported a better understanding of government and law, and 46% said they were more familiar with existing community resources. In the area of consumer economics, 8,762 reported improved competency, while 13,681 had increased their knowledge about health care.

Toward the Future

NYCALI practitioners have taken up the challenge of preparing adult learners to enter or advance in the workplace. In many cases, practitioners have added computer literacy to the teaching of reading, writing, and math skills, learning along with their students how to keep pace with the technological revolution. Teachers and tutors have expanded their knowledge of learning styles and have built a repertoire of instructional practices and collaborative partnerships that help them to better serve students with learning disabilities. NYCALI programs are incorporating the State Education Department's adult learning standards into instruction and are improving systems for program evaluation and learner assessment.

As NYCALI programs approach the millennium, they face changes in adult education nationally and locally. New legislation will mandate that these programs become part of a comprehensive training and employment system in tandem with welfare reform. Increasingly, programs will serve as a place where incumbent workers come seeking opportunities to improve their skills and to climb the education and career ladder. There will be an increased emphasis on family literacy, spotlighting the critical role that parent literacy plays in national and local efforts to prepare all children to be effective readers. NYCALI programs will acquire new partners in these endeavors and enhance their capacity to provide a range of services to learners. Learners themselves will seek out services that address their family and workplace needs and that are delivered in ways that address differences in learning styles and abilities.

In the face of these changes, there are some constants. Learners will continue to see adult education as the entry point to the information highway and as the path toward realizing their goals for economic and academic advancement.

Practitioners will continue to assess the effectiveness of their instructional approaches while program managers implement practices that lead to continuous program improvement. NYCALI providers and funders will continue to expect accounting of the results of instruction, and practitioners will develop innovative approaches to meet these requirements. Learners will, with the aid of technology, continue to apply their learning inside and outside the classroom. Together they will lead us into the twenty-first century, teaching by example the rewards of lifelong learning and the diversity of human potential.

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